

REMARKS

There are now pending in this application claims 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7, of which claims 1, 6, and 7 are independent. Claims 5, 10, 13 and 14 have been cancelled without prejudice or waiver of their subject matter. No claims have been added.

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, favorable consideration together with allowance of the above application is respectfully sought.

The invention as set forth in each of independent claims 1, 6 and 7 is directed to an image processing apparatus or process wherein the apparatus can be connected to a sheet processing apparatus having a plurality of sheet storage trays in which positions are changeable, and wherein a plurality of operation modes include at least two modes from among a copy mode, an image communications mode, and a printer mode, and wherein each of the storage trays are assigned to each of the operation modes. In accordance with the invention as set forth in the independent claims, if the main use by a particular user of the claimed apparatus is the copy mode, but the apparatus is also operated in a facsimile mode on occasion, the user may set the copy mode as the auto-clear mode. In this situation, if a no-operation state continues for a predetermined time after any operation mode has been completed, the apparatus can be ready for working in the copy mode which has been set as the auto-clear mode. Thus, when the user operates the apparatus as the copy mode again, the sheet processing apparatus does not need to move the sheet storage tray because the sheet storage tray assigned to the auto-clear mode has already been moved to the discharge position.

Applicant has amended each of claims 1, 6 and 7 to more clearly recite the above aspects of the invention.

Each of claims 1, 6 and 7 was rejected in the parent application under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kida et al. in view of Mandel and Yoshida et al. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Kida et al. was cited for its alleged teaching of an image forming apparatus with operation modes and an initial state and normal mode as well as a discussion of a desired equipment mode that is “mainly used” in the top tray for best accessibility. However, it was acknowledged that Kida et al. does not specifically disclose teaching a determination of a no-operation state for a predetermined time or shifting the operation mode based on the determination result. Yoshida et al. was cited for this shortcoming. However, Yoshida et al. merely teaches setting the operation mode back to an initial mode. Thus, Yoshida et al. is silent as to moving the sheet storage tray to a sheet discharge position in response to a determination means.

Moreover, none of the applied art teaches or suggests that a user can manually set a desired operation mode among operation modes as the auto-clear mode.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that each of independent claims 1, 6 and 7 is distinguishable over the applied art of record.

The remaining claims in the above application are dependent claims which depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1 and are therefore patentable for reasons noted above with respect to the independent claims. In addition, each recite features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the applied art. Favorable and independent consideration thereof is respectfully sought.

Applicant respectfully submits that this application has been placed in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and early passage to issue is respectfully sought.

Applicant's representative intends contacting the Examiner to schedule an interview and if this case is picked up for action before that time the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Applicant's undersigned representative.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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